



DELAINÉ EASTIN
State Superintendent of Public Instruction



September 15, 2000

To: County Superintendents
District Superintendents

Re: Immediate Intervention / Underperforming Schools Program
Eligibility for 2000-2001 State Planning Grants

Dear Superintendent:

The Public Schools Accountability Act (Senate Bill 1X, Chapter 3, Statutes of 1999) requires that the California Department of Education (CDE) annually invite eligible schools to participate in the Immediate Intervention/ Underperforming Schools Program (II/USP). **The attached "State Planning Grant Application Form" lists the eligible schools in your district for the 2000-2001 school year.** A statewide list of all eligible schools for planning grants for the 2000-2001 school year is available through the Academic Performance Index (API) web site at:

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/psaa/api>

In order to apply to participate in the II/USP, you need to follow a very **simple** process that I will outline later in this letter. If none of the schools in your district is eligible for the II/USP, the application form attached to this letter confirms that fact, and you need take no further action.

Last year 430 schools took advantage of the opportunity to obtain state planning and implementation grants to improve pupil academic performance. The 2000-2001 state budget provides the opportunity for another 430 schools to participate in this program. If your district has eligible schools this year, I urge you to apply on their behalf for this program. The planning and implementation grants, which are described below, provide schools with a unique opportunity to receive professional support and resources that will assist in improving student performance and achieving comprehensive school reform. We encourage you to contact the principals of eligible schools as well as local stakeholder groups to ascertain their interest in applying for this program.

State Planning and Implementation Grants

By October 15, 2000, the CDE will select a second cohort of 430 schools to receive state II/USP planning grants from those schools that volunteer for the program. These \$50,000 grants are to be used for developing school action plans to improve pupil achievement.

After submission of the action plans to the California Department of Education by May 15, 2001 (date amended by Senate Bill 1552) and the approval of applications for funding by the State Board of Education (SBE), schools will receive grants to implement the plans, sometime in the summer of 2001. State implementation grants will be a minimum of \$50,000, up to \$200 per pupil. Under the law, a participating school or school district must match the amount of state funding from any new or existing sources of funding (Education Code Section 52054.5).

Please note that pupil achievement will be carefully monitored in schools that are receiving II/USP funding. Schools that meet API growth targets will be eligible for financial and non-monetary rewards; schools that fail to meet these targets will be subject to local or state interventions (Education Code Section 52055).

Eligibility Criteria

A school is eligible to apply for a 2000 II/USP planning grant (and appears on the web site list and application form) if it placed in the lower five deciles of the 1999 API statewide ranking and failed to meet its API growth target for the 1999-2000 school year. According to the law, to meet its growth target, a school must not only meet its five percent schoolwide growth target but also growth targets for all numerically significant ethnic and socioeconomically disadvantaged pupil subgroups in the school.

In some instances, we were unable to calculate a 2000 API because of problems with demographic data from the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) program. In instances where a school had problems with demographic data, we considered a school eligible if its 1999 statewide API ranking was in deciles 1 to 5 and performance on the Stanford 9 as measured in normal curve equivalents (NCEs) declined from 1999 to 2000. In instances where a school had other problems with STAR background data, e.g., participation in the free and reduced lunch price lunch program, we only considered whether a school did not meet its schoolwide API target and not whether it had met subgroup targets for comparable improvement.

For exact information on a school's 2000 growth API or its 2000 subgroup growth APIs, please consult our PSAA web site on or after October 2, 2000. On that date, districts and charter schools will have access to the 1999-2000 API Growth Reports with a special user name and password, which will be mailed to you later this month.

As last year, schools with fewer than 100 valid STAR scores in either year are excluded from consideration. These small schools, along with alternative schools, continuation

high schools, and county schools, will participate in an alternative accountability system to be implemented beginning next year.

Application Procedures for Planning Grants

In applying for state-planning grants, you should comply with any local requirements established by your own governing board. **However, the law does not require any type of formal action or certification by your local governing board for you to apply on behalf of your schools.**

It is very simple to apply for a state-planning grant. For one or more of your schools to be considered for a planning grant, simply review the attached application and:

- Check the box to the left of the name of each school on the list that is applying for a planning grant.
- Sign the application. If your list of schools has more than one page, please initial the additional pages in the box(es) provided. If you are unavailable to sign the application, we will also accept the signature of your designee. Please provide all the information requested on the form.
- Make a copy of the completed application and retain the copy for your records.
- **Please have the original signed application mailed back to us by overnight mail.** Return **all** pages of the application. You should obtain proof of mailing and a tracking number from your overnight mail service to document the mailing date in case there are problems with mail delivery. **We will not accept faxes in lieu of overnight mail.**
- **Confirm by e-mail** that you have mailed the application to CDE. This procedure is for document tracking only. We will not accept applications via e-mail, only by overnight mail. You have two options to confirm by e-mail:

[either]

1. Complete and submit an electronic confirmation form available through the API web site at:

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/psaa/api>

[or]

2. Send your confirmation to the following e-mail address:

epic@cde.ca.gov

Please include

- your name or the name and title of your designee (if applicable)
- the name of your district
- your phone number, or the phone number of your designee (if applicable)
- **the name of the overnight mail carrier that you used, a mail tracking number, and date of mailing**

If none of your eligible schools is interested in applying, it is not necessary to return the application or to confirm by e-mail.

Application Filing Dates for Planning Grants

We will give first priority to any signed applications postmarked **October 4, 2000** or earlier. Signed applications postmarked October 5 will be given second priority; October 6 will be given third priority. The final priority date will be **October 6**. The CDE will consider any application that is postmarked after October 6 only in the very unlikely event that fewer than 430 schools apply to participate by that date. Once again, all applications must be returned by **overnight mail** to be considered. This is necessary in order for us to comply with the statutory deadline of October 15, 2000 for notification of selection.

Selection Process

The selection process will be similar to last year. If more schools apply for II/USP than can be funded, the law provides that the CDE select II/USP participants in the order in which they apply. In the event that more schools apply by a given filing date than can be funded, the CDE will use random selection within schools grouped by type (elementary, middle, and high) and by academic achievement (statewide API ranking). If fewer schools apply for participation than can be funded, the law authorizes the Superintendent of Public Instruction to randomly select the balance of schools from those that were eligible but did not apply.

Notification of Selection

The schools selected for state planning grants and the districts in which these schools are located will be notified by Monday, October 16. At that time, they will also receive detailed instructions about all activities that are required under the law to participate in the II/USP and a statewide list of external evaluators. A list of planning grant recipients will be posted on the PSAA web site at:

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/i/usp>

Districts that applied for participation in the II/USP but did not have any schools selected will also be notified by October 25.

External Evaluators

By November 15, 2000, each district with an II/USP planning grant school must contract with an external evaluator from the statewide list. The external evaluator will help identify weaknesses at the school that contribute to the school's below average academic performance and, along with a school and community team, will develop an action plan to improve pupil academic achievement. Under guidelines adopted by the State Board of Education on June 10, 1999, external evaluators must be organizations or individuals **external to the district** in which the II/USP schools are located. Inquiries about external evaluators should be directed to the Education Support and Networks Division, School Reform Assistance Office at (916) 657-3803.

Significance of Applying for the II/USP

In closing, I once again urge districts with eligible schools to participate in the II/USP. CDE is now in the process of releasing the API growth data for all schools in the state, as required by the PSAA. This release will generate immense public scrutiny around the question of what we are doing to raise student achievement levels in our schools, particularly in those schools that fail to meet their API growth targets. The act of applying for the II/USP is a proactive step, demonstrating the commitment on the part of administrators, teachers, and parents in eligible schools to be held accountable for their students' academic performance of their students.

Governor's Performance Awards (GPA) Program

Under the provisions of the Public Schools Accountability Act, any school that is participating in the II/USP is also eligible to receive cash awards under the GPA if it meets its growth target and other specified criteria. Therefore, a school may apply for participation in the II/USP this school year and not affect its future eligibility for the GPA.

Follow-up Questions

If you have specific questions about the application process outlined in this letter, please call the Educational Planning and Information Center at (916) 657-2273. Other questions about the II/USP itself, e.g., planning and implementation grants or external evaluators, should be directed to the Education Support and Networks Division, School Reform Assistance Office at (916) 657-3803.

Sincerely,

SCOTT HILL
Chief Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction